

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 02553 230928Z
ACTION EA-10

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O 230816Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4056
DEA HQS WASHDC
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2553

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, BM, TH
SUBJ: TACHILEK NARCOTICS SEIZURE

REF: (A) RANGOON 2550, (B) BANGKOK 18505, (C) RANGOON 2525

1. WE NOTE THAT AUGUST 23 ISSUES OF BANGKOK POAST AND NATION BOTH CARRY FRONT-PAGE STORIES OF THE GUB'S SUCCESSFUL TACHILEK NARCOTICS SEIZURE. CITING "ANTI-NARCOTICS SOURCES", THE STORIES STATE THAT "OVER 180 KILOS" OF HEROIN WAS SEIZED. THEY SAY THAT "ON THE U.S. WHOLESALE MARKET, THE DRUGS WOULD SELL FOR U.S. \$13.8 MILLION, AND THEY WOULD BE WORTH AT LEAST 10 TIMES THAT AMOUNT AFTER BEING CUT FOR STREET SALE, THE AGENTS SAID". THE STORIES CARRY NO DATELINE, IMPLYING THEY CAME FROM BANGKOK RATHER THAN NORTH THAILAND.

2. THE BURMESE ARE SURE TO BE FURIOUS AT THE PRE-MATURE DISCLOSURE OF THIS NEWS. THEY HAD PLANNED TO INFORM THE OPENING SESSION OF THEIR PYITHU HLUTTAW (PARLIAMENT) BEFORE TELLING THE PRESS AND ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM PUBLICITY BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND ABROAD. SINCE WE BELIEVE THAT ELEMENTS OF USG ARE THE ONLY ONES INFORMED OF THE OPERATION BY THE GUB, WE WILL INEVITABLY BE SUSPECT AS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE UNTIMELY RELEASE OF THE NEWS. NEWS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 02553 230928Z

THIS HAS BEEN CAREFULLY HELD WITHIN THIS POST AND WE ARE CERTAIN LEAK DID NOT OCCUR HERE. THIS AFTERNOON CHARGE AND EMBOFF WERE GIVEN UNPRECEDENTED TOUR OF POLICE LABORATORY COMPLEX AND WERE SHOWN THIS MASSIVE SEIZURE BY SENIOR OFFICERS INCLUDING NIB AND DSI CHIEFS (SEPTEL). BURMESE PRIDE AND EXCITEMENT ABOUT TOMORROW'S ANNOUNCEMENT WERE EVIDENT. THEY WANT MAXIMUM PUBLICITY BUT WE WERE AGAIN

ASKED TO ENSURE NO MENTION OF THE OPERATION PRIOR TO GUB ANNOUNCEMENT. WHETHER OR NOT LEAK CAME FROM USG OFFICER, WE WILL TAKE THE BLAME WITH CONSEQUENT DAMAGE TO PROGRAM.

3. WE WOULD APPRECIATE, BY IMMEDIATE NIACT CABLE, ANY INFORMATION EMBASSY BANGKOK AND DEA/BRO MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE ON THE SOURCE OF THE LEAK SO THAT WE CAN RESPOND TO INEVITABLE BURMESE INQUIRIES PRIOR TO PLANNED CELEBRATORY DINNER SCHEDULED TONIGHT BY MISSION OFFICERS FOR ENTIRE GUB ANTI-NARCOTICS HIERARCHY.

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